

***Carex pauciflora* Lightf.**

few-flowered sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5S2

General Description: Adapted from FNA (2002): This species is a perennial rhizomatous sedge with rhizomes that are 1/16 to 4 in. (0.2 to 10 cm) long. There are 2 to 12 culms that arise singly or in loose tufts. The culms are slightly rough because of the presence of short, stiff hairs. The culms are 4 to 15¾ in. (10 to 40 cm) tall. The lowest are reduced to bladeless or nearly bladeless sheaths. There are 1 to 3 foliage leaves per culm. The single spike consists of a slender terminal cone of 1 to 4 staminate flowers and 1 to 7 pistillate flowers. The pistillate scales are wider than and 2/3 the length of the perigynia. The perigynia are light green, becoming straw colored or pale brown, narrowly elongate-oblong, ¼ in. (5 to 7.8 mm) long by 0.7 to 1.1 mm wide, long-tapering, with an indistinct beak, and spongy for about 1 to 2 mm at the base. The achenes are 1/16 to 1/8 in. (2 to 2.4 mm) long by 0.8 to 1 mm wide, and the style is exserted 0.2 to 1.3 mm beyond the beak.

Identification Tips: The small number of flowers per plant is a good diagnostic feature. *Carex pauciflora* is similar in appearance to *C. pyrenaica* and *C. nigricans*. These species can be distinguished by their perigynia and habitat. The perigynia of *C. pauciflora* are ¼ in. (6 to 7.5 mm) long and spongy for about 1 to 2 mm at the base. This species is found in sphagnum bogs. The perigynia of *C. pyrenaica* and *C. nigricans* are 1/8 in. (3 to 4.5 mm) long and not spongy-based. *C. pyrenaica* and *C. nigricans* are high-montane or alpine species and do not grow in sphagnum bogs. A technical key is needed for identification.

Phenology: The species is identifiable from late May to early September.

Range: *Carex pauciflora* is found throughout Canada, northern Eurasia, and the northern continental U.S. In Washington, this species has been found in Whatcom, Snohomish, San Juan, King, Jefferson, Clallam, Mason, and Kittitas counties.

Habitat: Throughout its range, *C. pauciflora* grows in sphagnum bogs and acidic peat, usually on open mats, but also in partial conifer shade. In Washington, this species grows from 320 to 4550 ft (98 to

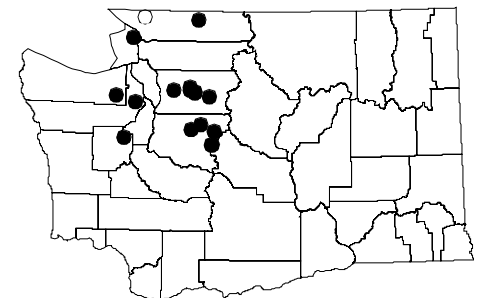
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Known distribution
of *Carex pauciflora*
in Washington



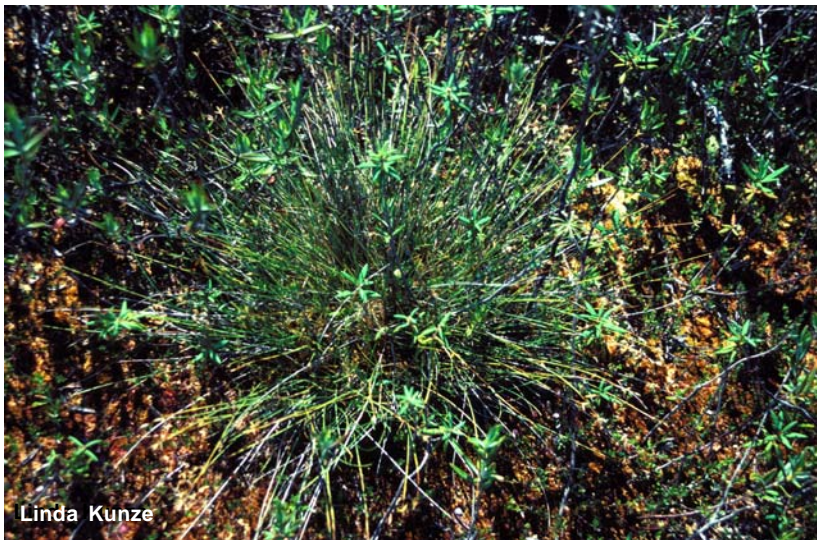
● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Linda Kunze



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2005 Produced as part of a cooperative project between the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Natural Heritage Program and the U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management. Persons needing this information in an alternative format, call (360) 902-1600 or TTY (360) 902-1125.

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1387 m). Associated species include roundleaf sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), sedge (*Carex* spp.), rush (*Juncus* spp.), small cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), threeway sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*), western Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), cattail (*Typha* sp.), bunchberry dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*), false lily of the valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*), sticky tofieldia (*Tofieldia glutinosa*), Alaska cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkaensis*), Canadian burnet (*Sanguisorba canadensis*), alpine laurel (*Kalmia microphylla*), and alpine bentgrass (*Agrostis thurberiana*).

Ecology: *Carex pauciflora* is found in wet acidic environments from low to mid elevations.

State Status Comments: Known from fewer than 20 occurrences from a limited geographic area.

Inventory Needs: Sphagnum meadows and bogs in Whatcom, Snohomish, San Juan, King, Jefferson, Clallam, Mason, and Kittitas counties should be surveyed for additional populations. Known occurrences should be revisited.

Threats and Management Concerns: Current threats include campfires and trampling by recreationalists.

References:

Flora of North America Editorial Committee eds. 2002. *Flora of North America North of Mexico* Volume 23: *Magnoliophyta: Commelinidae (in part): Cyperaceae*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY. 608 pp.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 914 pp.

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